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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME AND CO-ORDINATION ON THE DRAFT INTRODUCTION TO THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD STARTING IN 1992

Reproduced herewith are paragraphs 36-73 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) on its twenty-eighth session held at United Nations Headquarters from 6 to 19 September 1988 (A/43/16 Part II) which constitute the discussion, conclusions and recommendations of CPC on the Secretary-General's draft introduction to the Medium-term Plan for the period 1992-1997 contained in document A/43/329 which is also available to the Ad hoc Committee under cover of Commission document symbol number E/ECA/AD HOC.MTP/3.

B. Introduction to the medium-term plan for the period starting in 1992; calendar of consultations on the medium-term plan for the period starting in 1992

36. At its 60th to 64th meetings, on 8, 9, 12 and 15 September, the Committee considered the note by the Secretary-General on the preparation of the medium-term plan for the period starting in 1992 (A/43/329) and the report of the Secretary-General on the calendar of consultations on the medium-term plan starting in 1992 (E/AC.51/1988/6, subsequently issued under the symbol A/43/329/Add.1) Also before the Committee was the provisional summary record of the 37th meeting of the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1988, at which the Secretary-General's note had been considered (E/1988/SR.37).

Discussion

37. Delegations engaged in a wide-ranging examination of the methodology that underlay the drafting of the note by the Secretary-General on the preparation of the next medium-term plan, the content of section II of the annex, entitled "Mandates and programmes", the listing of priorities, the structure of the next medium-term plan and the duration of that plan.

(a) Methodology

38. Some delegations believed that the note did not fully comply with regulation 3.7 and rule 103.7 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, which set forth the function and purpose of the introduction to the medium-term plan. They stated that the introduction should highlight in a co-ordinated manner the policy orientations of the Organization, should indicate objectives, strategy and trends, and should contain the Secretary-General's proposals on priorities.

39. Some delegations agreed with the general thrust of the draft introduction, in particular with a proposed comprehensive approach to different threats to and aspects of international security. They endorsed the idea that the maintenance of international peace and security through the prevention and removal of threats to peace through the institution of international norms of behaviour and through economic and social development and the defence of human rights could not be achieved without joint concerted action. At the same time, some other delegations considered that the draft lacked a coherent thrust and an overall philosophy. It was too descriptive and listed in too much detail what appeared to be a catalogue of mandates. The medium-term plan itself, rather than the introduction, should contain the details of the Organization's future work. What was required in the introduction was a more thorough analysis and synthesis of mandates and programmes. Some delegations said the note contained very few ideas and many statements that were vague, general and sometimes conflicting. It should have been preceded by a summary of what had been done in the past in order to indicate trends in the future. Some delegations thought the note should be rethought and redrafted.

40. Other delegations were of the opinion that the note by the Secretary-General represented a fair effort to reflect the views of Member States as expressed heretofore. While some of those delegations disagreed with the draft introduction on points of detail, they believed it struck a certain balance, albeit an imperfect one, and offered an acceptable overview. An attempt to redraft the note would not

necessarily produce results that all delegations could support, it was stated. It was further stated that even a perfectly compiled medium-term plan was no substitute for real political will on the part of Member States in carrying it out. Some delegations emphasized that their written replies to the Secretary-General's earlier request for comments remained valid, as did the statements made on their behalf at the Economic and Social Council.

(b) Mandates and programmes

41. In discussing part A of section II of the annex, entitled "Peace, security, disarmament and the self-determination of peoples", some delegations stated that it was necessary to place greater emphasis on the need to resolve regional conflicts and to emphasize the role of the General Assembly, together with that of the Security Council and the Secretary-General, in peace-keeping. Emphasis should also be laid on the role of the General Assembly in areas such as disarmament, the codification and development of international law and international co-operation for development, among others. In addition, greater stress should be laid on non-use of force, peaceful settlements of disputes and suppression of acts of aggression, as well as the link between disarmament and development and the follow-up to the Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development. Some delegations stated that the need to ensure the restoration of the occupied Arab territories and to enforce the arms embargo against South Africa and eliminate apartheid should be underlined. Some others, however, said the references to those matters in the draft introduction did not reflect balance. The point was made that it was necessary to ensure the full implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples as enshrined in resolution 1514 (XV). Furthermore, it was necessary in the view of some delegations to clarify the special role played by the United Nations in the questions of Namibia and Palestine. However, strong reservations were expressed by some delegations concerning the references in the draft introduction to a comprehensive test ban, nuclear-free zones and verification, and concerning the concept of good-neighbourliness. Other delegations strongly supported those references as well as the concept of good-neighbourliness. Concern was also expressed by some delegations regarding comprehensive solutions to global problems that might, in fact, undermine the integrity of the Charter and that therefore needed careful exploration and discussion before incorporation into United Nations plans.

42. During the consideration of part B, on international law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, the renewed emphasis on the primacy of law in international relations was welcomed. Some delegations agreed with the view of the Secretary-General that international security in its widest sense fundamentally depended upon respect for and compliance with international law. Some delegations expressed disappointment at the absence of specifics. The point was also made that additional emphasis should be devoted to the basic freedoms cherished by human beings around the globe as well as to economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development. Some delegations brought out the need to describe in more detail United Nations activities in the peaceful uses of outer space. It was mentioned that the role of the International Court of Justice should be highlighted. Some delegations stated that, in comparison with other major issues, disproportionate emphasis had been placed on terrorism, while others felt more emphasis was needed. Others still considered that no consensus yet existed on the definition of terrorism and that therefore the promotion of further legal steps such as the anti-hijacking conventions was more realistic than the

development of an international law on terrorism. Some delegations considered the listing of international legal questions before the United Nations to be incomplete, and others suggested making a general reference in the text, while specific instruments could be listed in an annex. Some delegations stated that the paragraph dealing with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was too optimistic in tone. Others did not share that view. Some delegations felt that the Organization's future activity on this matter should be considered primarily as a question of economic development.

43. During the discussion of the text on the economic and social advancement of all peoples (part C), it was stated that the entire economic and social sector needed an approach which reflected realism and fresh thinking and which led to specific proposals and activities. Some delegations considered that the core of the planning effort for the 1990s was the clear setting of priorities. They stressed that among the problems that would mostly effect international peace and security were the persistence of underdevelopment, the widening gap between rich and poor countries and the stagnation and even decrease in the standards of living of the majority of people in a great number of developing countries. Those delegations considered that a major programme should be created to cover the promotion of international co-operation for development. In this context, they emphasized the need to pay greater attention to the desperate socio-economic conditions of the least developed countries. Some delegations believed that insufficient weight had been given to the role that the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General should play in dealing with questions such as external debt and trade, commodities and international finance and monetary questions, and others. Others felt that the role of the United Nations per se in this field was quite limited. The role of free markets in relation to commodities and resource flows should be mentioned, it was stated. Resource flows, economic and technical co-operation among developing countries, the net transfer of resources from developing to developed countries and the causes of poverty should all have been given more prominence, said some delegations, as well as the question of co-ordination with the specialized agencies in, inter alia, operational activities for development. In this context, the point was made that the specialized agencies should complement the work of the United Nations, not the other way round, and that the United Nations should continue to play a leading role in searching for solutions to the problems of economic development. With regard to technical co-operation, some delegations stated that the 1970 Consensus was still valid and should provide the basis for the treatment of that issue in the introduction to the plan. The importance of the relationship between the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade and the medium-term plan for the period starting in 1992 should also have been better highlighted, it was stated. Moreover, some delegations stressed the need to further examine within the United Nations the existing links between the problems of peace, security, disarmament and development and environment, as was outlined in paragraph 80 of the draft introduction. Some delegations agreed with the idea of the Secretary-General that, in the economic and social area, the role of the United Nations in providing a universal forum for the consideration of issues of concern to Member States, for the early identification and analysis of emerging problems and for the harmonization of the actions of nations should be increased.

44. Some delegations expressed concern at the way the Bretton Woods institutions were mentioned in the draft introduction. In their view, the United Nations should be the institution that set guidelines in the economic field. These delegations

also referred to the outdated solutions and recommendations of the Bretton Woods institutions, which lacked sensitivity to the economic and social consequences they could cause to Member States.

45. Some delegations also felt that more emphasis should have been placed on the environment. In this connection, reference was made to the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland report) and the particular need to find solutions to the related problems of pollution and toxic waste. The importance of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was highlighted. Some delegations stated that more attention should be given in the draft introduction to action by the United Nations to mitigate the effects of natural disasters and to efforts to develop new and renewable sources of energy.

46. Some delegations stressed the great importance of social issues in the work of the United Nations and proposed that social development should be a major programme. Some delegations stressed the need to pay particular attention to the questions of the advancement of women, youth, the aged, the handicapped and the homeless. They also underscored the need to give special importance to the welfare and development of children, including the establishment and fulfillment of their rights. It was important too, in the view of some delegations, to recognize the shared responsibility of producers and consumers for the eradication of drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

47. Some delegations, in their observations on part D of section II of the draft introduction, entitled "Information and common services", noted that public information and common services were not really programmes, but involved activities undertaken to further the Organization's substantive activities. It was stressed that the independence and quality of the international civil service should be increased. In the view of some delegations, a reference to a new world information and communications order should be included. Others questioned whether public information really belonged in part D, or whether it should either be placed elsewhere or be largely subsumed within substantive programmes. References were also made to the potential risks of relying too much on outside services and to the desirability of decentralization in financial and personnel services, if it was properly carried out. The need to continue to introduce new technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of conference and other services was also mentioned.

(c) Priorities

48. In their examination of section III of the draft introduction, the Secretary-General's comments on priorities, some delegations felt that it was important to set clear priorities and that the Secretary-General had a role to play in assisting Member States to set those priorities by identifying policy orientations. Some delegations stated that the comments on priorities in the draft introduction repeated points made in the section on mandates and programmes. Others believed that more emphasis should have been placed on analyzing problems and proposing solutions on the basis of forward-looking thinking. Some delegations were of the view that priority should be accorded to activities where the United Nations was likely to be able to achieve practical results. Some delegations considered that the priorities presented in the introduction should be drawn up in accordance with resolution 36/228, section II.

49. Some delegations also felt the priorities in the draft introduction were presented at too great a length. Others considered that the order of the priorities was at fault, stating that economic and social development should take pride of place. Some delegations believed more attention should have been devoted to Namibia, to Palestine and to the continuing problems of decolonization. The reference to the possible establishment of a multilateral nuclear alert centre was considered by some delegations to be premature. Some delegations indicated that the fundamental concern in the field of disarmament was to achieve general and complete disarmament. They added that limitation of armaments, not just control, should be an aim. Some delegations stated that the Organization's possible role in the verification of compliance with disarmament agreements, in satellite monitoring and seismic detection of nuclear tests should have been highlighted further. Other delegations were not of that view. Some considered that greater emphasis should have been placed on demography and statistics.

50. Some delegations took the view that the priority accorded by the General Assembly to the question of Palestine had not been adequately reflected in the draft introduction. Furthermore, the resolutions relating to the holding of an international conference on the Middle East conflict and the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable right to self-determination had not been given sufficient prominence.

(d) Structure

51. The Committee also examined the proposed new structure of the medium-term plan, as outlined in paragraphs 33 to 36 of the draft introduction. Some delegations welcomed the proposed simplification of the major programme and programme structure, which would make the plan clearer and more transparent, while better reflecting the purposes of the United Nations as set forth in the Charter, and ensuring a more comprehensive and integrated approach to United Nations activities. It was also noted that the simplification should also serve to make the Organization work more efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, delegations emphasized that existing mandates should continue to be fulfilled and subprogrammes should not be reduced in scope or substance. In the view of some delegations, it was important for the structure to allow flexibility.

52. Some delegations considered that the restructuring should not be just a reorganization of programmes under new headings. The adoption of a simple, logical structure eliminating duplication was the first step to making the medium-term plan a useful management tool, and should lead to a shorter and clearer document reflecting the Organization's priorities.

53. However, some other delegations objected to the proposed restructuring and believed that the current structure of the medium-term plan should be maintained. In the view of those delegations, while the Charter should inspire the activities of the Organization, it was not a management tool and therefore not the proper basis for a planning document. The point was made that simplification of the structure risked being oversimplification, and thus failing to reflect the full scope and content of United Nations activities. More information was required on what the new programmes should be and how the new structure would compare with the one in the current plan.

54. Some delegations indicated that the lack of clarity and transparency of the new structure did not permit the Committee to form a definitive opinion, and that the information presented had given rise to serious doubts.

55. Further discussions of a preliminary nature then took place on the basis of an informal paper provided by the Secretariat at the request of delegations. These discussions are reflected in paragraphs 56 to 66 below. In introducing the paper, the representative of the Secretariat stated that consultations were still going on with the programme managers, and that the listing of proposed programmes contained in the paper was still provisional. The representative of the Secretariat further stated, in response to questions and comments from delegations, that separate programmes on Namibia, Palestine and decolonization had originally been omitted because of the possibility that the Organization's aims regarding those questions could be fulfilled by the time the next plan began in 1992. However, the representative added, separate programmes covering those questions could be added. The representative also stated that, in designing the structure of the plan, it made little difference in practice whether a sectoral approach or an organizational approach was employed, since the organization of Secretariat units was fundamentally based on the mandates of the United Nations. The representative also drew attention to regulation 3.6 (b) of the regulations and rules governing programme planning, according to which

> "The medium-term plan shall identify ...
>
> "Programmes, consisting, within a major programme, of all activities in a sector which are under the responsibility of a distinct organizational unit, normally at the division level;".

On the point of the omission of programmes because the aim of the questions contained in them could be fulfilled by the time of the medium-term plan for the period starting in 1992, some delegations expressed their strong objections to singling out the programmes relating to Namibia, Palestine and decolonization for omission for such a reason. They were of the view that programmes mandated should appear in the medium-term plan. In the event that their aims are fulfilled, the present exercise of revision to medium-term plans would deal with all programmes that fulfilled their aims.

56. Contrasting views were expressed on the proposal to have separate programmes for the regional commissions. The specificity of their activities had to be reconciled with a central approach. Some delegations considered that the activities of the regional commissions should be grouped under a major programme. Some delegations stated that economic and social issues could be kept separate as long as care was taken that the implementation of the relevant programmes would reflect their close relationship. Other delegations stated that such a separation was difficult to reconcile with an integrated approach to development. Regarding technical co-operation, it was noted that it might be more feasible to treat this activity under the relevant programmes, as in the current plan, rather than having a specific programme. On a more general issue, some delegations considered that a case-by-case approach should be adopted to considering the introduction of changes reflecting emerging trends of international concern. For instance, crime prevention should be treated as a separate programme under major programme III on international co-operation for the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

57. Delegations made observations on the overall structure, as well as detailed comments and suggestions on the content, grouping and description of major programmes and individual programmes. It was stated that the proposed new structure appeared to present the 31 major programmes of the current medium-term plan as 38 programmes regrouped under four new headings. There appeared to be duplication, and some of the proposed new programmes could be combined. The point was made that the proposed new structure lacked conceptual consistency, with some programmes being based on substantive content and others according to organizational considerations. Additional information indicating future subprogrammes and on the listing of the activities of the regional commissions and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development was called for. Specific proposals were made to add new major programmes covering regional commissions, social development, and humanitarian affairs. The concept of "global commons" was not fully developed, but might be acceptable as a major programme. It was recalled that the outcome of the deliberations of the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council on the In-depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Functions in the Economic and Social Fields would also have to be taken into account.

58. It was stated that the relationship between the medium-term plan and the programme budget would be best served by a dual approach. In this way, the plan would reflect as far as possible a sectoral approach, while the programme budget would be based on the organizational structure and would be accompanied by information showing the distribution of resources by sector. It was also recalled that statements of programme budget implications were meant to include a programmatic analysis of the effects of proposals at the level of the medium-term plan.

59. In proposed major programme I on the maintenance of peace and security, disarmament and self-determination of peoples, some delegations stated that they failed to understand the reason for grouping those elements together in the same major programme. In two proposed programmes of that major programme, that were designed to cover political and Security Council affairs and political and General Assembly affairs, the repeated use of the word "political" was questioned, and the suggestion was made that those two programmes be merged. Questions were also raised about the inclusion of the words "equal rights" in the title of a proposed programme designed to cover special political questions, equal rights and self-determination. Some delegations were concerned that the questions of Namibia, Palestine and decolonization had not been included in this major programme. They proposed that decolonization be featured in the title of the major programme and in the relevant programme. Some delegations considered that Namibia, Palestine and decolonization should all be covered by separate programmes.

60. Regarding proposed major programme II, some delegations were concerned about the wording of the title: "Respect for international law, human rights and fundamental freedoms and development of normative standards" as presented in the informal paper of the Secretariat. The grouping of elements and the use of the term "normative standards" were also criticized by some delegations. The delegations indicated that the work of the United Nations should be the progressive codification and development of international law, and that that fact should be reflected in the title of the relevant programme. It was further stated that no mandate existed for the inclusion of a reference to ocean affairs in the title of a proposed programme designed to cover the law of the sea and ocean affairs. Some delegations said that proposed programmes designed to cover the promotion and

protection of human rights, international protection of and assistance to refugees and international drug control were social rather than legal issues. Some delegations also questioned the inclusion of a proposed programme covering the peaceful uses of outer space in major programme II, which did not reflect all aspects of that question.

61. In their discussion of proposed major programme III, "International co-operation for the economic and social advancement of all peoples", as presented in the informal paper of the Secretariat, some delegations took the view that the words "of all peoples" were superfluous. Some delegations expressed their concern that the title of this major programme could lead to confusion in that it mixed economic and social aspects, and yet it appeared that only economic matters were contained in it. The delegations stated that the role of the Organization in the economic field should be active and not limited to providing a forum for study. They indicated that questions of great importance for the developing world, such as food and agriculture, industry and transport, basic resources, trade in manufactured goods and the transfer of technology, as well as science and technology, should also feature as programmes under this heading. It was further stated that specific programmes on African economic recovery, ocean affairs, debt, resource flows and narcotic drugs should also be included in proposed major programme III. The suggestion was also made that economic development and social development should be two separate major programmes, perhaps with the addition of another major programme covering humanitarian questions. In particular, it was proposed that economic development could contain programmes on development and international co-operation: issues and activities, including co-ordination; technical co-operation for development; global economic issues and policies; trade and development finance; and transnational corporations, while social development could encompass global social issues and policies; the advancement of women; the environment; population and so on. Some delegations pointed out that many activities had economic, social, legal and humanitarian aspects.

62. Some delegations stated that a proposed programme covering statistics should also be contained in major programme IV. Others, however, stated that statistics formed a basis for economic and social analyses and should be linked with economic development, as was the question of population.

63. Some delegations stated that proposed major programme IV entitled "information, conference and administrative services", was not really a major programme at all and could be entitled "Common services". Because of the substantive nature of some of its activities, public information should not be listed in this major programme, said some delegations. Public information, which was grouped under the same major programme, had characteristics quite distinct from those of conference services. Specific programmes should be devoted to library, personnel, financial and general services and to programme planning and co-ordination, it was stated. The view was expressed that a programme covering legal services could also be added.

(e) Duration

64. Some delegations stated that decisions regarding the duration of the plan should be taken on technical grounds. One consideration was the desirability synchronizing the planning cycle of the United Nations with that of the other organizations of the system, which led some delegations to suggest that the next medium-term plan should extend from 1992 to 1995. Other considerations were the

appropriateness of the six-year term for planning purposes and the need to adhere to the regulations and rules governing programme planning. It was emphasized that one deviation from the normal planning cycle had already occurred, and it should not be repeated.

(f) General

65. Some delegations viewed the Committee's discussion as preliminary in nature and considered that further information was needed.

66. In addition to the comments reflected above, delegations made detailed and specific drafting suggestions, which in their view should be duly taken into account by the Secretariat during the preparation of the final introduction to the medium-term plan.

Conclusions and recommendations

67. The Committee recommended that in continuing work on the introduction to the medium-term plan for the period starting in 1992, the Secretary-General should take fully into account the views of Member States expressed at the Committee's twenty-eighth session and that the General Assembly should seek further comments of Member States through discussion in its Main Committees. To this end, the Secretary-General's note (A/43/329), together with the report of the Committee, should be made available to all relevant United Nations bodies.

68. With regard to priorities referred to in the draft introduction, the Committee recalled that General Assembly resolution 41/213 required full implementation of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

69. The Committee reiterated that the medium-term plan for the period starting in 1992 should be formulated in full conformity with the regulations and rules governing programme planning and emphasized the need to bring the relevant provisions of those rules and regulations to the attention of intergovernmental subsidiary bodies in the context of the preparation of the medium-term plan.

70. The Committee recommended approval of the calendar of consultations proposed by the Secretary-General for the preparation of the medium-term plan (see A/43/329/Add.1).

71. The Committee recommended that the next medium-term plan should cover the period 1992 to 1997 and requested the Secretary-General to ensure effective co-ordination with the specialized agencies, including those having a different planning cycle.

72. In considering the proposal for the structure of the medium-term plan, the Committee agreed that the information available was not sufficient to enable it to reach a substantive conclusion. The Committee therefore recommended that the General Assembly at its forty-third session should consider with particular attention the question of the structure of the medium-term plan in light of the discussion conducted in the Committee.

73. The Committee stressed that the medium-term plan, including its introduction, is an instrument that should contribute to the improvement of the efficiency and

the effectiveness of the United Nations in the implementation of its mandated activities, and thus to the enhancement in the future of the role of the United Nations as set out in the Charter.